



## FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

### YOUR RIGHTS AND YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

This pamphlet explains the Food Stamp Program rules for applicants. It also explains what you must do if your food stamp application is approved.

#### THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

The Food Stamp Program helps people with low income and few resources get the food they need for good health. Food stamp electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards are used in place of cash to buy food. However, most people find they must spend some cash along with their food stamp benefits to buy enough food for a month.

Your eligibility for food stamp benefits is based on:

- The number of people who live with you, buy food together and eat together;
- Your household's total income (which must be less than the Food Stamp Program limits); and
- Your household's resources such as bank accounts and real estate other than your home (which must also be less than the Food Stamp Program limits).



#### INTERVIEWS

If you apply for food stamp benefits, you or another responsible household member must appear for an interview with a county office worker. (Or, you may authorize someone who knows about your household to come to the interview.) We may be able to schedule an out-of-office interview if you cannot name an authorized representative and you are unable to come into the county office because you are age 60 or older, physically or mentally disabled, or work or attend school during our normal office hours.

You must contact the DHS county office to request an out-of-office interview. **If you miss an appointment, we will not schedule another appointment unless you ask us to do so.**

**IF YOU NEED THIS INFORMATION IN A DIFFERENT FORMAT SUCH AS LARGE PRINT, CONTACT THE DHS COUNTY OFFICE.** Si necesita este formulario en Español, llame al 1-800-482-8988 y pida la versión en Español.

## YOUR RIGHTS

1. **You have the right to reasonable accommodations for a disability. This includes receiving forms and instructions in different formats such as large print.**
2. You have the right to be treated courteously and with respect.
3. You have the right to apply for food stamp benefits or any other public assistance program at any time.
4. Participation in the Food Stamp Program is not time-limited. You can continue to receive food stamp benefits as long as you are eligible under Food Stamp Program rules. This is true even if someone in your home receives TEA cash assistance. If someone in your home does receive TEA cash assistance, participation in the Food Stamp Program will not count against their TEA time limits
5. You have the right to have your application processed timely.
6. You have the right to know the Food Stamp Program rules.
7. You have the right to know how we worked your food stamp benefit case.
8. You have the right not to give us any or all the information we request. *(If you do not give us a social security number for anyone or if you will not provide information about citizenship or alien status for anyone, we will not include that person in your food stamp case. But, we will count all that person's resources and part of that person's income when we work your case. Your application may be denied if you fail or refuse to provide information such as, but not limited to, income or resource verification.)*
9. You have the right to look at your case file. If you disagree with something in your file, tell your county office worker.
10. You have the right to call our Customer Assistance Unit if you have questions or problems and want to talk to someone outside the DHS county office. If you live in Pulaski County, call 682-8233. If you live outside Pulaski County, call toll-free 1-800-482-8988. If you are hearing impaired, call (501) 682-8820. You may write to the Customer Assistance Unit at:  
**Arkansas Dept. of Human Services  
Customer Assistance Unit  
P.O. Box 1437, Slot S340  
Little Rock, AR 72203-1437**

11. You have the right to a hearing if you do not agree with the action we take. You have 90 days from the date of the action to request a hearing. Sometimes you can keep getting the same amount of food stamp benefits until you have the hearing. To do so, you must ask for the hearing before the date on which we are to close your case or reduce your benefits. If the hearing official decides the county's action was correct, you may have to repay these benefits. Ask your county office worker to explain. To ask for a hearing, you or your representative may call the county office or go into the county office. Or, you may call the Appeals and Hearings Unit at 501-682-8622. (The TDD number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-285-1131.) You may write directly to the Appeals and Hearings Unit at the following address:

**Arkansas Dept. of Human Services  
ATTN: Appeals and Hearings Section  
P.O. Box 1437, Slot N401  
Little Rock, AR 72203-1437  
FAX: 501-682-6605.**

12. If you ask for a hearing, you have the right to legal representation during the hearing process. Contact the Helpline Center for Arkansas Legal Services at 1-800-952-9243 to request free legal aid. (In Pulaski County, you should call 501-376-3423.) You may also log onto their web site at:

[www.arkansaslegalservices.org](http://www.arkansaslegalservices.org)

Click on the Helpline icon.

13. You have the right to complain if you feel we have discriminated against you because of race, color, national origin, sex, age, political beliefs, or disability. You must file your complaint no later than 180 days from the date on which this discrimination occurred. To file a complaint of discrimination write or call:  
**United States Department of Agriculture  
Director, Office of Civil Rights  
Room 326-W, Whitten Building  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410  
Telephone: 1-800-537-7697 (voice and TDD)**

You may also write or call:

**Arkansas Dept. of Human  
Services  
Office of Employee Relations/  
Equal Opportunity  
Donaghey Plaza North, Suite 205  
P.O. Box 1437, Slot N250  
Little Rock, AR 72203-1437  
Telephone: 501-682-6003  
FAX: 501-682-8926  
TDD: 501-682-7958**

## REPORTING CHANGES

If you are found eligible to receive food stamp benefits, you must report certain household changes to the DHS county office. A list of these changes appears below:

1. Report Changes in any source of income
2. Report Changes of more than \$50 in your household's gross monthly income
3. Report Household Changes when someone moves into or out of your home, a new baby is born to a household member, a household member dies, etc.
4. Report Changes in your place of residence when you move. If you move, you must report your new rent or mortgage costs and your new utility costs.  
**NOTE:** It is important that you report any new address even if you don't move.
5. Report Changes in the number of vehicles when someone in your household gets a new car, truck, van, boat or motorcycle even if you are still paying for them.
6. Report Changes in liquid resources when your household's liquid assets (bank accounts, stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit, and cash, etc.) begin to total \$2,000 or more.
7. Report Other Changes if you wish to do so. You are allowed but not required to report: Shelter costs that increase or decrease; dependent care (baby-sitting) costs that increase or decrease; total gross income that increases or decreases by less than \$50.00; and allowable medical costs that increase or decrease.

## WHEN TO REPORT CHANGES

Your worker will give you a "Change Report." If anyone in your household has a change to report, you may use the "Change Report" or you may call, write or go into the county office to report the change.

Unless your household is classified as a "Limited Reporting" household, you must report any of these changes within 10 days of the date the change becomes known to you

**TO LIMITED REPORTING HOUSEHOLDS:** If you are classified as a Limited Reporting household, your worker will give you both a "Change Report Form" and a "CHANGE REPORT ADDENDUM" that explains your reporting requirements. Although you are not required to report most changes, we do ask that you report if your household's total gross monthly income increases to more than the Food Stamp Program limits for your household size. So, if you are found eligible to receive food stamp benefits, your DHS worker will explain what the gross monthly

income limits are for your household size. (In some counties we also ask you to report if certain household members begin working less than 20 hours a week. If your household is subject to this requirement, the worker will explain it to you.) You are allowed to report changes that would result in more food stamp benefits for your household at any time. For example, you might wish to report when someone in the home loses a job or when someone moves into your home.

If anyone in your household gets TEA or Medicaid, he or she must continue to report changes as required by TEA or Medicaid rules. We will let you know if the reported change will make a difference in your food stamp benefits.

**TO HOUSEHOLDS THAT WILL GET A SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT:** If the worker tells you that your household must submit a semi-annual report, your household is subject to the limited reporting requirements. Also, in the fifth month of your 12-month certification period, we will send you a report form. You must complete and submit this semi-annual report. If you do not complete and return the semi-annual report, your case will close.

## PENALTY WARNINGS

If you get food stamp benefits you must follow the rules listed below:

- ♦ **DO NOT** give false information or hide information in order to get food stamp benefits.
- ♦ **DO NOT** give false information in order to help someone else get food stamp benefits.
- ♦ **DO NOT** sell or trade your food stamp benefits.
- ♦ **DO NOT** use your food stamp benefits to buy ineligible items like alcoholic drinks or tobacco.
- ♦ **DO NOT** use a Food Stamp Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card that belongs to someone else to buy food for your household.
- ♦ **DO NOT** use food stamp benefits yourself or allow someone else to use these benefits if you know that the benefits have been received illegally, given to someone other than the legal owner, or are to be used in any illegal manner.

Any member of your household who admits to breaking any of these rules or who is found guilty of breaking any of these rules may be disqualified to receive food stamp benefits for:

- One year for the first violation
- Two years for the second violation
- Permanently for the third violation

This person may also be fined up to \$250,000, sent to jail for up to 20 years or both. They may be subject to federal prosecution. Federal penalties may include an additional disqualification period of 18 months or for second and subsequent felony convictions for Food Stamp Program fraud, a mandatory jail sentence.

#### Additional Disqualifications

- A person found guilty in a Federal, State or local court of trading food stamp benefits for controlled substances will be barred from receiving food stamp benefits for 24 months for the first violation and permanently for the second violation.
- A person found guilty by a court of trading food stamp benefits for firearms, ammunition or explosives will be permanently barred from receiving food stamp benefits.
- A person who is a fleeing felon or as a parole or probation violator is barred from receiving food stamp benefits while he or she is fleeing to avoid custody.
- A person who is found guilty or who pleads guilty or no contest to a felony offense involving the distribution or manufacture of a controlled substance will be permanently barred from receiving food stamp benefits.

#### **REQUIREMENT TO WORK**

Unless they are exempt, people between the ages of 18 and 50 who receive food stamp benefits must meet the **Requirement to Work**. Anyone who is not exempt must work at least 20 hours per week at a job or a self-employment enterprise; or attend an approved job training course at least 20 hours per week. The Food and Nutrition Service has granted the State waivers or exemptions to the **Requirement to Work** in some areas.

DHS COUNTY OFFICE ADDRESS & TELEPHONE:

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Your food stamp case may be selected for a quality assurance (QA) review. If so, the QA worker will check your case record to see if you have given us the correct information. He or she will also check to make sure the DHS county office handled your case correctly. If your case is picked for a QA review, the QA worker will interview you. You will be asked to present information to prove your statements. The QA worker may contact your employer, your bank, other agencies, your landlord and other people for information. If you refuse to cooperate during a QA review, your food stamp case will be closed. You will not be allowed to get food stamp benefits again until you cooperate with the QA worker or until January of the following year, whichever comes first.



#### **ACCESSING FOOD STAMP BENEFITS**

If you are eligible to receive food stamp benefits, you will be provided with a card that looks like a debit card. This is called an electronic benefits transfer or EBT card. The EBT card may be used to buy food at any authorized store that sells groceries. Most families will have to spend some of their own money along with the benefits on the card to buy enough food for a month. You must have a personal identification number (PIN) to use your EBT card. You will select your PIN.